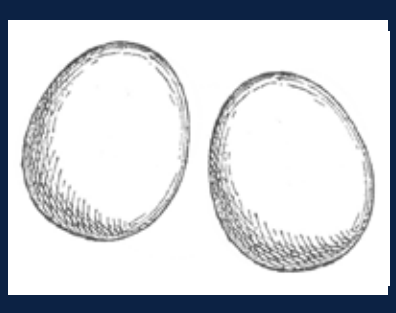
A History of the Cast

Broken bones have always been a common occurence. But the methods for treating them have changed over the centuries.

~3000 BC:
Ancient Egyptians used bark splints wrapped in linen and stiff bandages

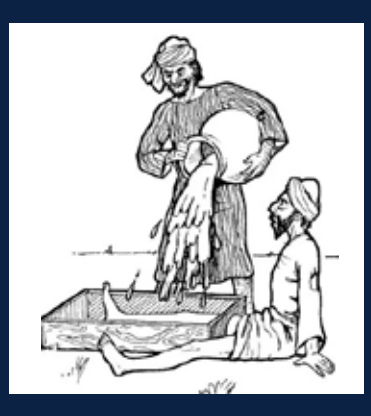
700-2000 BCE:
The Shoshone Indians used hardened strips of rawhide



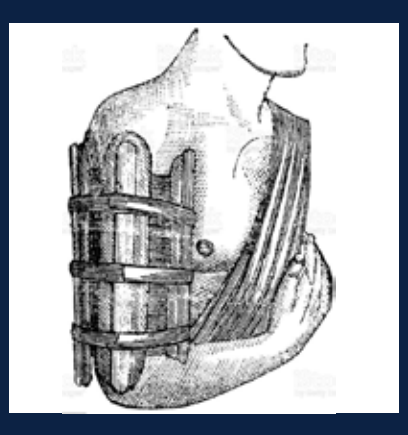
~1000 AD:
An Arab Andalusian physician introduced using clay gum mix-tures, as well as flour and egg whites

16th CE:
French surgeon Ambroise Pare invented the use of wax, cardboard, cloth and parchment as cast material for broken bones.

~1828:
Berlin doctors used wooden boxes filled with moist sand



Early 1840s:
A Belgian surgeon used strips of linen or bandages soaked in starch and splints



Early 1850s–1950:
Plaster of Paris (treated gypsum powder) was rubbed into strips of course cloth, creating a fast-drying plaster when mixed with water.

20th century:
Plaster of Paris casts are still used today, though doctors have made improvements in application and efficiency

1970s:
Introduction of fiberglass casts (faster-drying, lighter, more durable, water resistant)

1990s:
Water resistant cast linings introduced (but are costlier and take longer to apply)

August 24, 2019:
NorthShore Orthopaedic & Spine Institute became the Guinness World Records™ title holder for the "Largest Orthopaedic Cast"! The cast would fit a 78-foot-tall person! It was displayed and signed at the ceremony.

NorthShore
University HealthSystem